Fiscal Year 2018 Annual Report
Thanks for making it all possible
In our second year facing a president and a Congress who seem hostile toward our environmental goals, we at Environment California made a conscious decision to do more than just play defense.

We pursued a strong, forward-looking agenda for three reasons:

First, the planet can’t wait. The survival of wildlife in our oceans depends on whether we curb plastic pollution now, not two or six years from now. Ditto for the quality of the air we breathe and the water we drink, the sources of the energy that powers our lives and the stability and suitability of our climate.

Second, success breeds success. When one community or college campus commits to renewable energy, another is more likely to follow their lead. When litigation compels one company to curb its pollution, others feel greater pressure to fall in line. When citizens succeed in reducing the use of one form of single-use plastics, they’re emboldened to try to reduce the next.

Third, ultimately winning—and defending—strong environmental protections depends on us winning enough hearts and minds to our cause to make any politician think twice about devaluing the environment, no matter the pressure applied by polluting industries or other interests.

In these pages, you’ll find reports on our vigorous efforts to defend California’s clean water and air laws, our national parks and other public lands and our progress on global warming. But you’ll also find examples of our work with cities and communities to reduce plastic pollution, with companies to reduce deforestation and comply with pollution limits, with college campuses to embrace renewable power, and much more—work that’s paying off in positive results now for our environment.

The places we love will always need defending. But defending what we’ve already won isn’t enough. We want to live in, and leave to our children, a greener, healthier world than the one we live in today. That’s what we’re working for. Your action and support make it all possible, and for that we are deeply grateful.

Dan Jacobson
State Director, Environment California
Global Warming Solutions

From defending our existing climate protections to promoting policies to reduce emissions, our global warming program is working to eliminate the pollution and practices that are warming the planet and changing our climate.

Environmental Defense: Our Climate

For much of the early part of 2018, the Trump administration hinted at plans to roll back federal clean car standards aimed at keeping greenhouse emissions at bay. Environment California Research & Policy Center was ready, holding rallies in support of clean car standards and citing then-Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt for recklessly endangering our climate and health.

Environment California, our members and coalition partners submitted hundreds of thousands of public comments to the Trump administration opposing rollbacks of the clean car standards and other crucial environmental protections. In Washington, D.C., our national network’s advocates stood up for climate science and worked to defend the Clean Power Plan, one of the best tools we have for reducing global warming pollution from power plants.

Clean transportation

In May, Environment California Research & Policy Center published a report outlining a major step we can take to cut global warming emissions. Titled “Electric Buses: Clean Transportation for Healthier Neighborhoods and Cleaner Air,” the report found that replacing all of America’s school buses with electric buses could avoid an average of 5.3 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year, and that replacing all of our diesel-powered transit buses with electric buses could save more than 2 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year.
Our energy program seeks concrete steps toward a world in which we conserve more, use the energy we have more wisely and efficiently and rely only on sources of energy that are clean, renewable and tread lightly on the planet.
Victories in clean energy

Renewable energy is booming in California. This year, we’ve taken some incredible steps towards a brighter future. We’re in the middle of a clean energy revolution and our research, advocacy and action is driving it.

California passes landmark clean energy law SB 100

Clean energy won big this year in California. In September, Gov. Jerry Brown signed SB 100 into law. The landmark legislation commits the state to get 60 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030 and 100 percent zero-carbon electricity by 2045.

We’ve been working on this bill since its inception, leading the coalition inside and outside the Capitol to build the support necessary to pass the bill. We got more than 250 organizations in the environmental, public health, labor, environmental justice, faith, business and youth communities to write letters in support of SB 100, including former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. In the days leading up to the Assembly’s vote to pass the legislation onto the governor’s desk, we called our representatives urging them to vote yes and put California on the bright side of history.

This victory solidifies California’s role as a leader in the country and world on renewable power—no matter what’s happening in Washington, D.C. With the world’s fifth-largest economy, the state’s investment in renewable energy will lead to better technologies, lower prices and, most importantly, less of the pollution that’s warming the planet.

UCs go 100 percent renewable

Just a few days before Gov. Brown signed SB 100 into law, the University of California (UC) Office of the President announced that the entire University of California system would commit to running on 100 percent clean, renewable energy by 2025. The plan also establishes goals to reduce energy use, and pledges not to use natural gas for heat and hot water in any new buildings or major renovations, starting in June of 2019. That means California’s flagship public university system—comprised of 10 campuses, three medical centers, three national laboratories, more than 190,000 faculty and staff, and more than 238,000 students—will all be operating on clean energy in the near future.

Go Solar

Every year, enough sunlight shines on the U.S. to provide 100 times more power than we need. Last year, Environment California’s Go Solar campaign moved us closer to realizing that potential. Our Shining Cities project is urging 50 of America’s cities, including several right here in California, to think bigger, act smarter and tap the sun for more power. Of the 69 cities surveyed in Environment America Research & Policy Center’s report, “Shining Cities 2018: How Smart Local Policies Are Expanding Solar Power in America,” Los Angeles is first in the nation in total installed solar energy capacity, followed closely by San Diego.
In a world of incredible material abundance, our conservation campaigns work to bring more nature into our lives and to protect and preserve our open spaces, wild places and wildlife for their own sake.

Jennifer Rubiello, state director of our network’s Florida office, spoke at Clearwater Beach to rally the public to protect our oceans from offshore drilling.

Alaska’s Tongass National Forest, the world’s largest temperate rainforest, is protected by the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. Our national network was instrumental in putting those protections in place 17 years ago, and we defended them last year from attempts to take them away.
Action in defense of wildlife

Last year, we ran campaigns to defend and promote more open spaces, wild places and wildlife. We worked to find concrete solutions to the world’s plastic waste problem, and to keep our beaches and coastal waters safe from offshore drilling. We put our expertise and people power to work to protect bees and other pollinators from lethal pesticides, and to keep our public lands safe from destructive development.

Wildlife Over Waste

Every day in the United States, people throw away about 175 million plastic straws. Many straws end up in or near the ocean. Plastic can harm or even kill marine life, that can choke on or be strangled by it. California has been working to ban single-use plastics for years, and many California cities and counties have already banned single-use plastic straws or only make them available upon request.

This year, the California Legislature passed a straws-on-request law aimed at reducing pollution from single-use plastics. The new law requires restaurants to only provide diners with straws when requested, and allows consumers to make small but impactful changes that will decrease the plastic pollution harming wildlife, and clogging up our oceans and waterways. Nothing we use for a few minutes should be allowed to pollute or waterways for hundreds of years.

Tropical Forest Protection

Every hour, our planet loses 1,000 acres of forests—along with the animals that depend on these forests for their survival. That’s why Environment California launched a new campaign in 2017 to convince U.S. companies to stop cutting down any tropical forest—a commitment known as “zero deforestation.”

Through blogs and social media campaigns, our staff made the case for tropical forests as vital resources to be protected, not slashed and burned for profit.

Our organizers focused their efforts on Cargill, a major player in the global food industry headquartered here in the United States. More than 13,900 people signed our petition urging the company to lead the shift to zero deforestation.

No Bees, No Food

Bees are in decline, and the potential consequences for our food supply are devastating. All across the country, our national network pushed for bans on a class of bee-killing insecticides known as neonicotinoids (or neonics), which have been linked to bee die-offs. We gathered 219,000 public comments to the Environmental Protection Agency calling for a neonic ban, and urged states to join Connecticut, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey and Oregon in taking action against neonics.
Clean Water & Air

From holding water and air polluters accountable to uniting local clean water champions, our national network’s Clean Water & Air program promotes a world in which these precious, life-giving resources are no longer treated as dumping grounds for our waste.

**Victory No. 1:** A $1.4 million settlement to clean up the Suwannee River Basin in Florida.

**Victory No. 2:** A $2 million agreement to curb pollution from the world’s largest steel company in Pennsylvania.

**Victory No. 3:** A $3 million settlement in Texas to stop clean air violations at an oil refinery near Houston.
Illegal pollution stopped, action taken on lead contamination

Last year, Environment California and our national network provided the action, research and advocacy to protect the water we drink and the air we breathe.

Environment America Litigation Project

Environment California is part of a national network that researches cases of illegal pollution in California and across the country, and takes polluters to court if necessary. Our litigation team had a banner year nationally, settling three major lawsuits.

In Pennsylvania, our state affiliate PennEnvironment took ArcelorMittal, the world’s largest steel company, to court over hundreds of violations of the Clean Air Act. The company eventually agreed to a $2 million settlement. Our partner group Environment Florida sued chicken producer Pilgrim’s Pride over discharges of toxic wastewater into the Suwannee River, ultimately reaching a $1.42 million settlement—$1.3 million of which will be used to clean up the Suwannee Basin. Environment Texas won a major settlement in our Clean Air Act lawsuit against Pasadena Refining System Inc., a subsidiary of Brazilian state-controlled oil company Petrobras. The terms included pollution reduction upgrades and $3,525,000 in civil penalties, most of which will go to fund a clean vehicles project.

Water threats identified

Environment California Research & Policy Center worked to put a spotlight on threats to our water. Our “Get the Lead Out” report sounded the alarm about the unacceptable prevalence of lead contamination in the drinking water of schools all across the country. As kids headed back to school last fall, Environment California Research & Policy Center released a toolkit to help parents take action at the local level to get the lead out of their children’s drinking water.

Environment California Research & Policy Center also released a report titled “Troubled Waters,” which identified industrial pollution threats to waters throughout the country, and launched an interactive map to help pinpoint pollutants in the Delaware River.

When the Trump administration proposed cutting the Environmental Protection Agency’s budget by nearly a third, Environment California Research & Policy Center released a series of reports titled “Rough Waters Ahead,” illustrating the damage those cuts would cause to our waterways in a way budget numbers alone couldn’t capture.

Clean Water Network

Through the Clean Water Network (CWN), Environment America Research & Policy Center brings together more than 250 local and regional groups dedicated to protecting clean water across the country, allowing them to build deep networks of coordinated support. Last year, we expanded the CWN into Alabama, uniting experienced watershed groups into a coalition.
2018 was a big year for electric vehicles, especially buses. And it’s much needed, as transportation is the No. 1 source of carbon pollution in the country. Buses play a key role in our nation’s transportation system, reducing the number of individual cars on our roads, make our communities more livable and sustainable, and provide transportation options for people of all ages and abilities.

On board with electric buses

In February, Environment California Research & Policy Center and Frontier Group released a report titled “Plugging In: Speeding the Adoption of Electric Vehicles in California with Smart Local Policies,” highlighting the best practices to help local California officials make cities electric vehicle-friendly.

At the close of 2017, the city and county of Los Angeles took action to ensure that by 2030 100 percent of our buses will be clean. That means a quarter of all buses in the state of California will be clean.

Plugging in

Environment California Research & Policy Center, CALPIRG Education Fund and Frontier Group released the report “Electric Buses: Clean Transportation for Healthier Communities and Cleaner Air” in June. And just two months later, California Air Resources Board released a draft standard to transition all of California’s transit buses to zero-emission battery or fuel cell technologies by the year 2040. Environment California supports these standards, as they would call for the transition of over 10,000 vehicles and vastly improve air quality while decreasing the amount of greenhouse gasses released statewide.

At the Global Climate Summit in San Francisco in September, Environment California and our national network teamed up with Proterra, a leading innovator in electric transportation, for a tour of Proterra’s facilities and a discussion of the industry.
Thanks for making it all possible

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Thousands of citizens supported Environment California, Inc., or Environment California Research & Policy Center, Inc., and/or Environment America’s connected political action committee, Environment America Voter Action, by making contributions in fiscal year 2018. The members listed below were particularly generous in backing the organizations’ research and advocacy. Names that appear in italics denote Monthly Supporters.

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From a very young age, I have known that it is essential to preserve the natural beauty I have been fortunate enough to enjoy. There was an ache in my heart to do more, but I never knew exactly what I could do. One day, while I was living in Old Town Alexandria, Virginia, an Environment America representative knocked on my door to discuss protecting our water. I immediately wrote them a check and have been involved ever since. Environment America has the most effective methods I’ve seen to truly make a positive change in our world, and I am always impressed by the diverse spectrum of causes they are able to focus on. They have the ability to unite like minded people for a greater cause, and they have the expertise to navigate bureaucracy. Being a member empowers me to feel that my involvement is making a difference.
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